

Information for taking the Progestogen Only Pill (POP)

How to take the POP

You can start the POP any time in your menstrual cycle if it's certain you're not pregnant. If you start the POP on the first day of your period you'll be protected from pregnancy immediately.

You can also start the POP up to and including the fifth day of your period and you'll be protected from pregnancy immediately. However, if your menstrual cycle is shorter than 23 days, you'll need additional contraception, such as condoms, until you've taken the pill for 2 days.

If you start the progestogen-only pill on any other day of your cycle, you won't be protected from pregnancy straight away and will need to use condoms for the first two days of pill-taking.

You can choose a convenient time in the day to take your first pill, continue to take a pill at the same time each day until the pack is finished, start your next pack of pills the following day – there's no break between packs of pills.

What to do if you miss a pill

There are 2 different types of progestogen-only pill:

- Traditional progestogen-only pill – must be taken within 3 hours of the same time each day.
- Desogestrel progestogen-only pill – must be taken within 12 hours of the same time each day

If you are more than 3 hours or 12 hours late, take a pill as soon as you remember – only take 1, even if you've missed more than 1 pill. Take the next pill at the usual time – this may mean taking 2 pills on the same day, carry on taking your remaining pills each day at the usual time. Use extra contraception such as condoms for the next 2 days (48 hours) after you remember to take your missed pill. If you have unprotected sex from the time that you miss your pill until 2 days after you start taking it reliably again, you may need emergency contraception.

Sickness and diarrhoea

If you're sick (vomit) within 2 hours of taking a progestogen-only pill, it may not have been fully absorbed into your bloodstream. Take another pill straight away and the next pill at your usual time. If you continue to be sick, keep using another form of contraception, such as condoms, while you're ill and for 2 days after recovering.

If you have very **severe** diarrhoea that continues for more than **24 hours**, this may make the POP less effective. Keep taking your pill at the normal time, but treat each day that you have severe diarrhoea as if you'd missed a pill. Follow the missed pill instructions

Other medications

Medicines such as some of those used to treat epilepsy, and TB, and the complementary medicine St John's Wort may make the POP less effective. Please check with your pharmacist or doctor if you start a new medication while taking POP.